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A LETTER,

ADDRESSED

TO THE PEOPLE OF PIEDMONT,

ON THE

ADVANTAGES

OF

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION,

AND

THE NECESSITY OF ADOPTING ITS PRINCIPLES IN ITALY.

By JOEL BARLOW,

AUTHOR OF THE VISION OF COLUMBUS, A LETTER TO THE NATIONAL CONVENTION, THE CONSPIRACY OF KINGS, AND ADVICE TO PRIVILEGED ORDERS.

Translated from the French by the Author.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS Letter was written at Chambery in Savoy, in December 1792, *at the requeſt of thoſe members of the National Convention who were then in that country, for the purpoſe of organiſing the department of Mont Blanc. It was printed in French at Grenoble, and in Italian at Nice, and ſent from thoſe places into Piedmont, and other parts of Italy, during that winter.*

It will occur to the reader of the Engliſh copy, which now appears for the firſt time in print, that the defection of Dumourier, in April 1793, *the violent factions which diſtracted the Convention, and the ſubſequent civil commotions in many parts of France, occupied the attention of the Republicans the remainder of that year. Their operations againſt the league of foreign enemies (which was now augmented by the addition of England, Holland, Spain and Naples) were confined for that campaign to the defence of the frontiers; and they were thus prevented from puſhing the extenſive advantages which they had gained the year before.*

This circumſtance relieved the King of Sardinia from the deſpair in which he had been plunged. It gave him time to augment his forces and repair his fortifications. It gave him arguments againſt the French and the principles of the revolution, and thus enabled him in ſome degree to unite his people in favour of the ſyſtem of deſpotiſm to which they had been accuſtomed; for it muſt be confeſſed, that the manner in which the French affairs were conducted that year, had a ſtrong tendency to excite a diſreliſh to their cauſe in the minds of diſtant or ignorant obſervers. In addition to all theſe advantages, he received

a ſubſidy from England, to enable him to defend his own dominions; by the aid of which he has ſince obtained a large body of auxiliary troops from Tirol, Milan, and Tuſcany.

Theſe unexpected events produced a remarkable change in the relative ſituation of the French and Piedmonteſe, from the cloſe of the firſt campaign to the cloſe of the ſecond. But the third is now opened with as much advantage to the French as the moſt ardent republican could expect. The troops deſtined for the invaſion of Italy this year, did not amount to more than one tenth of the military force that they now have in motion on the Continent. Yet theſe have already paſſed the Alps in three different directions, and are at this time maſters of a conſiderable part of Piedmont. It is probable that this campaign will eſtabliſh the revolution in that country, but unhappily with more expence of blood than was expected from former appearances. Could the ſame force have been employed there the laſt year, under the circumſtances that then exiſted, we may preſume it would have met but little oppoſition; and the writer might have had the ſatisfaction of ſeeing that his letter had produced ſome effect in promoting the cauſe of liberty and happineſs in that intereſting part of the world.

JULY 15, 1794.

☞ The notes in this edition were not publiſhed in the former ones.

A LET-

A

LETTER,

&c.

Chambery, Dec. 27, 1792.

CITIZENS OF PIEDMONT,

YOU occupy one of the ſtrongeſt frontiers of a country which nature ſeems to have deſtined to be the happieſt in Europe. But a number of imperious circumſtances, of which you have been rather the victims than the authors, have for many centuries inverted the order of things, and deprived you of thoſe advantages which ought to attend your ſituation. I am a ſtranger in this part of the world; Italy is known to me only from its hiſtory, and your preſent condition only from diſtant obſervation and report. It is not probable that I ſhall ever have the pleaſure of ſeeing you or any part of your country. You muſt, therefore, acquit me of entertaining any deſire to miſlead you, as I can have

no poſſible intereſt in addreſſing you this letter, but the intereſt which the human heart naturally takes in uttering the truth on a very important ſubject. You are my fellow-creatures; as ſuch I love you, and cheriſh the ties which ought to be mutual between us. You are in a condition which appears to me to call upon you to burſt the bands of ſlavery; in this view, I am ready to hail you as brothers, and wiſh to aid you in your work.

I preſume, in the firſt place, and I think I am not deceived, that you are diſcontented with your preſent ſituation. I believe you are convinced that you cannot be happy, as a people, while the powers of your government remain as they now are, as relative to the church, the ſtate, and the army. If this be true, you muſt wiſh for a change; provided ſuch change can be within your power, and provided you are convinced that it would be for your advantage. Let us examine theſe two points; whether you are able to effect a revolution in your government; and if you are, whether you would be benefited by it.—For it is not my wiſh to hurry you into meaſures, of which you cannot ſee the iſſue, and for which you are not prepared.

I. *Are you able to effect a revolution in your government?*

This

This queſtion need never be aſked of any people, when conſidered with reference to themſelves only, without regard to their neighbours. A whole people is eſſentially ſovereign. They can at all times do as they pleaſe with their own affairs, unleſs they are overpowered by ſurrounding nations. It is the people who ſupport the government as it now is; and the ſame ſovereign people can at any time change its form, and ſupport it in whatever manner it ſhall pleaſe them beſt. The queſtion has no difficulty in it, but when viewed with reference to the intereſt which other governments may have in preventing a revolution in their neighbourhood.

The enquiry, purſued in this connection, becomes more extenſive; eſpecially when applied to a country of ſmall dimenſions, and to a nation leſs powerful than ſome of its neighbours. Such is Piedmont. Had you been called upon ſeven years ago to look into your affairs, and take the government into your own hands, you muſt have conſidered it as a dangerous experiment. Even ſuppoſing the weight of your ſufferings to have been as great then as they are now, and ſuppoſing you had been poſſeſſed of the ſame information which you have ſince drawn from the progreſs of liberty in Europe, it would ſcarcely have been prudent

for you to have engaged in ſo daring an enterpriſe. All the tyrants in your neighbourhood would have brought forward their armies of ſlaves to cruſh the rebellion. The French court would have been, at that time, as much your enemy as the French nation is now your friend. And the houſe of Auſtria, with all the ſubdiviſions of its power in Italy, poſted at your gates, would have united with that of Bourbon, to have guaranteed your king in every poſſible extent of his oppreſſion.

Under theſe diſadvantages your ſtruggles for liberty might have been vain; they might even have produced a new injury, inſtead of relieving you from the old. But the ground is now changed; the duty you owe to yourſelves is clearly pointed out by the natural current of events; and the work you have to do, in eſtabliſhing a perfect and undiſturbed liberty, is in my opinion much eaſier than you imagine. France is at this time, not only the moſt powerful nation in Europe, but when engaged, as ſhe now is, in defence of liberty, ſhe is a match for all the other powers of Europe, when united in defence of tyranny. France is now your natural friend, the friend of all people, and the enemy of all tyrants. She is indeed the only friend you have as a nation in this part of the world. France has brought liberty to your doors; and ſhe

invites

invites you, in the name of all that is dear to you as men, in the name of all that can bind you to the intereſts of human nature in general, to accept the bleſſing at her hands. She has done more; ſhe has taught you and all other people how public happineſs is to be acquired and preſerved. She has addreſſed herſelf to the great principles of reaſon which are common to all men; ſhe has cleared away the maſs of prejudice, of falſe doctrine, of ſuperſtition in the ſcience of morals; a maſs which the complicated abuſes of tyranny, continued for many centuries, had accumulated on the human mind. She has laid down and clearly defined the rights and duties of men and citizens, explained the great doctrine of equality, the true deſign of government, the nature of the truſt to be repoſed in public officers, as ſervants of the people, by whom they are created, and by whom they are paid. She has taught you a great practical truth, which is too conſoling to be rejected, and too clear to be called in queſtion, *that you are the ſovereigns in your own country*; that you have not, that you cannot have a maſter, unleſs you chooſe to give up your reaſon, and renounce the character of men; that for any man to call himſelf your ſovereign is a blaſphemy againſt God the ſovereign of nature, and againſt men the proprietors of the earth.

Obliga-

Obligations of gratitude are due to the French nation from you, and from every people in Europe. She has conquered liberty for all men, and laid the foundation for univerſal public felicity. Other nations have only to build the ſuperſtructure, of which the model is given them in the conſtitution of this great republic.

But let us not amuſe ourſelves with words, nor reſt the argument on theoretical principles, however inconteſtible they may be. Let us ſpeak of facts that are paſſing before our eyes, and call to mind the events of the great year that is now drawing to a cloſe. You have ſeen the principal tyrants, and the moſt formidable armies of Europe, combined and marching in the full career of promiſed victory againſt the liberties of France. Theſe armies, after ſweeping over half Europe, and famiſhing whole countries in their way to the French frontiers, have there been cut to pieces by a handful of freemen, and driven out of their country. Liberty has marched on the heels of the fugitives; the arch tyrant of Auſtria, at the head of this fatal conſpiracy of kings, has loſt the fineſt part of his dominions; many of the ſubaltern princes of the Empire have loſt the whole of theirs, and are now beggars abroad among their brother brigands, who are in expectation of the ſame inevitable fate. The

ſtandard

ſtandard of liberty has reached the borders of the Rhine by the miſcarriage of the ſame combination which has brought it to the ſummit of the Alps.

All the crowned heads in Europe are now covered with thorns. The man of Turin, who calls himſelf your king, has been forced to relinquiſh one half of the uſurpations of his anceſtors, and is now menacing you with deſtruction, for fear you ſhould reclaim the reſt. The Duchy of Savoy and the county of Nice, more fortunate than you, have been the firſt to caſt off his yoke, and are now ready to aſſiſt you with their arms to follow their example. The Pope, and the other Italian deſpots, are occupied in reſtraining the ſpirit of liberty at home; ſo that no one of the neighbouring powers is in a condition to take any conſiderable part in your affairs, except the French; and the French are wiſhing to give you every aid that you may aſk.

Under theſe circumſtances, we need no longer enquire whether you are able to effect a revolution; the more natural queſtion is, are you able to reſiſt it? It is true, the French have renounced all ideas of conqueſt, and have declared that they will never make war againſt the liberty of any people. But you will obſerve, that this principle contains in itſelf a declaration of war againſt all tyrants who

who are hoſtile to the liberty of France; eſpecially againſt thoſe whoſe vicinity renders them dangerous to the internal peace of the new republic, by foſtering its fugitive traitors, and being the centre of new conſpiracies againſt the rights of man. The court of Turin comes under this deſcription. It is hoſtile to the liberties of France; it has been ſo from the beginning; the nature of its external connections, and of its internal conſtitution, requires that it ſhould be ſo to the end. The court of Turin muſt, therefore, be overturned; the government of your country muſt be changed, and its powers reſtored to you, to whom they naturally belong.

This is a ſimple view of facts, which may ſerve to indicate the preſent criſis of your affairs, of which it is proper you ſhould be appriſed; that by a due conſideration of the cauſes you may not be aſtoniſhed at the effects. I make known to you my opinion, with all the frankneſs that the ſolemnity of the ſubject demands; and it ſeems almoſt impoſſible that you ſhould fail to turn the conſequences to your advantage.

II. The more important queſtion to be diſcuſſed, is *Whether you will be benefited by a revolution in your government?*

Many

Many of you will doubtleſs conſider this enquiry as ſuperfluous, becauſe your condition can ſcarcely be rendered worſe, and the means of rendering it better are ſo obvious that they cannot eſcape the ſlighteſt obſervation. But thoſe of you who are accuſtomed to reflect on the principles of liberty will pardon the ſimplicity of the enquiry, in favour of the great maſs of the people whom it is our duty to inſtruct. There has been ſo much falſehood and folly impoſed on that claſs of mankind, in order to debaſe and brutalize their minds to the level of their condition, that their ignorance has become preternatural; it is almoſt neceſſary to begin their inſtruction by informing them that they are human creatures. But, citizens of Italy, deſcendants of Brutus and Cato, this ſtate of degradation is not the condition deſigned for man. The God of equal liberty has allotted you a different birthright; you are now invited to reclaim your inheritance, to take poſſeſſion of your portion among your brethren, to enjoy it in peace, and reſtore harmony to the great family of men.

You have been fatally miſinformed with reſpect to the nature of the French revolution, and the events that have attended it. Your religious teachers, and your political maſters have an intereſt in deceiving you. They unite their efforts for this purpoſe;

purpoſe; they blind your eyes, as you blind the eyes of a mill-horſe, that he may not ſee his harneſs, nor conſider the weight he draws. If the mill-horſe could know that he has only a feeble child for a conductor, and that he is made to go conſtantly round in the ſame ſmall circle, ſo that he cannot hope to come nearer his journey's end; eſpecially if he could look into the neighbouring fields and ſee the other horſes enjoying their liberty, he would ſoon revolt againſt his little deſpot, he would grow diſcouraged with the ſame unpromiſing round of fatigue, and refuſe to do his work. It is for this reaſon that you blind his eyes. My friends, the ſame arts are uſed with you. The clergy and the nobles of your country, with a man at their head whom they call a King, do nothing but live upon your labours. They cannot ſupport their luxury by any other means than by keeping you conſtantly at work. They know that if you were to be informed of their weakneſs and of your own ſtrength, you would refuſe to be their drudges. They are ſenſible that the moment you open your eyes, you will ſee that they are but men, that all men are equal in their rights, that they have no more right or power to be kings and lords over you than you have to be kings and lords over them; and that in conſequence of this, you would immediately overturn that abominable ſyſtem of public

robbery

robbery which they call a government, and eſtabliſh a new and equal government, which ſhould ſecure to every man the fruits of his own labours, protect the innocent, puniſh the guilty, and inſtruct every member of ſociety in his duties and his rights.

This is preciſely what the people of France have done; and the performance of this great work, ſo neceſſary to the happineſs of mankind, is called the French Revolution. It is the knowledge of this revolution which your court and clergy wiſh to conceal from you, leſt you ſhould follow the example. They prevent the French news-papers from coming into your country; they forbid the reading of all books that treat of this revolution, and all converſation on that or any other political ſubject; they have ſhut up the popular theatres at Turin, and left open none but that of the nobility, from which the citizens are excluded; they have ſuppreſſed the great univerſity of that capital, called *the Univerſity of the Provinces*, which uſed to bring ſtudents from all parts of Italy, and a conſiderable emolument to the town; they have doubled the number of their ſpies, and increaſed the powers of the police.

All this is to keep you ignorant of the French revolution,

revolution, that you may not be diſpoſed to follow the example. Obſerve the inſult offered to your underſtanding. If the example were bad, your good ſenſe would teach you to ſhun it; it would need only to be known, to be deſpiſed; and it ought to be explained to all people, that they might learn to avoid ſuch a dangerous innovation. If it be good, it ought to be taught by your teachers, and imitated by all the world. But be aſſured that the very caution they uſe to prevent your coming to the knowledge of the fact, is a proof that ſuch a revolution would be an advantage to you, and a diſadvantage to them.

But this is not all; they have invented a thouſand falſehoods to ſupply the place of truth. They have told you lies, in order to excite your enmity againſt your beſt friends, and to rouſe you to war againſt thoſe principles which ought to be as dear to you as to the French; becauſe they are the principles of equal liberty and national happineſs, applicable to all people. They have told you that the French nation is a race of robbers, aſſaſſins and atheiſts; that they have overturned the religion of their country, waged war againſt all property and againſt the lives of its owners. Theſe are impudent falſehoods which never could have been impoſed upon you for a moment, had you been permitted to judge for yourſelves.

With regard to religion, I only requeſt you to look into the firſt principles of liberty, as declared by the National Aſſembly. You will find them conformable to the ſyſtem of the Catholic faith, as taught by the Apoſtles and recognized in your country, before the church was connected with the civil government, and before the miniſters of the altar became the tyrants of the ſtate. The French conſtitution has declared, that all men ſhall be free to worſhip God in their own way, and to follow the dictates of their conſcience. If any man ſhall tell you that this is deſtroying religion, he is a liar, and not worthy to be your teacher. The goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt preaches to you in the ſtrongeſt language the great doctrine of equality; that all men are equal in the ſight of God, and that you ſhall call no man your maſter upon earth. This is the very language of the French Revolution. But its authors have gone farther; and, to ſilence all cavillers who could perſuade you or others that they have deſtroyed the Catholic religion, they have done more to maintain it than any legiſlative body ever did before; they have ordained that the prieſts and biſhops, choſen by the people, ſhall be ſalaried and paid out of the national purſe.

It is true, they have ſuppreſſed thoſe haunts of idleneſs, hypocriſy and vice, known by the name

of monaſteries and convents. This is an advantage to religion, inſtead of being againſt it; for religion teaches men to do good, and to labour for their living; but theſe inſtitutions teach them to do nothing, and live upon the labours of others. Be aſſured, therefore, that the French have done nothing to the diſadvantage of religion; but, on the contrary, they have done much to maintain it in its native purity and independence. But I entreat you in the ſincerity of my heart not to receive this fact on the ſtrength of my aſſertion, or that of any other man; but to look into their conduct, and judge for yourſelves.

You have been likewiſe taught to believe that the French have violated private property. This is a malicious calumny, which every ſtep of their revolution will contradict, the moment you become acquainted with it. In all the decrees of the National Aſſembly, in all the irregular movements and inſurrections of the people, whatever was the object, you will find they have paid a moſt ſacred regard to individual property. Their conduct in this reſpect has been more laudable within the laſt three years than that of any other government in Europe. The ſame thing may be obſerved with regard to the private morals of the people; they are eſſentially better than they formerly were. There

have been leſs inſtances of theft and robbery in France ſince the revolution, than at any former period; and probably leſs, in proportion to its population, than in any of the neighbouring countries during the ſame period.

With regard to the National Aſſembly, I will give you ſome inſtances of their inviolable principle of preſerving the property of individuals amidſt the ſhock of the revolution. The abuſes of the ancient government had created thouſands of uſeleſs offices in every department of ſtate, in the *law*, the *finance*, and the *king's houſehold*—the ſame as you ſee at Turin. Theſe offices were ſuppoſed to have been purchaſed and paid for by thoſe who held them; though many of them had been given gratis through favour and intrigue. On the regeneration of the government and of the nation by the revolution, it was neceſſary that theſe deſtructive ſinecures ſhould be ſuppreſſed; and the Aſſembly, conſidering them as the property of the holders, purchaſed up this property, and paid the proprietors the full prices that they had given, or were ſuppoſed to have given, for their places. This act of juſtice was certainly not neceſſary to the revolution. It muſt therefore be conſidered as a mark of that national dignity which forbids the violation of any kind of private property, however ſlender the title by which it is claimed.

Another inſtance may be obſerved in the public debt. It is well known that the public debt of France, as well as that of Piedmont, was contracted by a wicked and infamous court, the greater part of it for the worſt of purpoſes. It was in part contracted to ſupport the vices of a horde of men and women at Verſailles, who were a diſgrace to human nature, and whom the nation was under no obligation to maintain; it was in part contracted to carry on foreign wars and conqueſts, the expreſs purpoſe of which was to rivet the chains of the people at home. But as the creditors in general were not to be blamed for theſe things, they were declared to be the proprietors of the debt; and the nation aſſumed upon itſelf the payment, without any diminution. This muſt ever be remembered as an act of ſovereign magnanimity, and of diſintereſted protection to the property of individuals; an act to which they were not conſtrained by any neceſſity or previous obligation. A royal bankruptcy might have been declared, without affecting the future credit of the nation; and the revolution would have ſuffered no delay, but would have been facilitated by proceeding on this principle. Inſtead of doing this, the people have voluntarily taken an immenſe burden on themſelves, even under the humiliating circumſtance of giving a ſanction to all the extravagance of the two laſt centuries, and paying at this day, under the rigid

œconomy

œconomy of a republic, for thoſe ſplendid palaces, gardens, and water-works, which inſult the poverty of millions, and ſtare the nation in the face with the unpuniſhed crimes of a race of execrated kings.

The act of the aſſembly, declaring the church lands to be the property of the nation, the ſuppreſſion of tythes and other feudal claims, have been often mentioned as violations of property. Thoſe who really conſider them in this light are weak men, or they have not examined the ſubject; thoſe who perſuade you to think ſo, without believing it themſelves, are wicked men, and not to be truſted. As to the church lands, this act of the Aſſembly did not change the property of them at all. They belonged to the nation before. What the Aſſembly did, was to change the mode of paying the clergy, equalize their ſalaries, and reduce the number of eccleſiaſtics. That laborious and more uſeful claſs of the clergy, who before were ſtarving upon a beggarly pittance, have had their ſalaries raiſed; that idle and over-grown claſs, who, without doing any duty, were living in the ſtyle of princes and tyrants, have been reduced to a moderate income. All are now choſen by the people, and all paid by the nation. With regard to the feudal claims, they were founded in uſurpation. The landlords and

nobles, to whom they were attributed, had no right to them, or property in them, any more than the King of Sardinia has a property in you, or in the people of Jeruſalem, of which he likewiſe ſtyles himſelf King. Theſe feudal claims were mere badges of ſervitude, which the eſtabliſhment of equal liberty, and the abolition of hereditary titles rendered it neceſſary to deſtroy. The nation has in all inſtances ſhowed itſelf able to diſtinguiſh between the empty ſuperſtition of pomp, which ſerves only to debaſe mankind, and the ſolid principles of ſociety on which the revolution is founded.

You have heard it likewiſe aſſerted, that the French revolution has been marked with cruelty and murder. This is unfortunately true. But it has likewiſe been marked with treachery, with bribery, with perjury, with all the complicated wiles of expiring deſpotiſm. All the cruelty, all the crimes of every name or denomination, that have attended this revolution, have proceeded from royalty, the adherents of royalty, and the refractory prieſts. The court of Verſailles had been for ages a ſchool of falſehood and deceit; and the execution of the penal laws ſerved as a public exhibition of torture, to familiariſe the people with the moſt ſanguinary puniſhments.

If

If the court of Turin, and the laws of Piedmont, are any better, it is happier for you; you will have the leſs wickedneſs to combat in the courſe of your revolution. But I fear in ſome reſpects they are worſe. Theſe circumſtances in France had trained up in all parts of the kingdom a numerous claſs of men verſed in every art of treachery and perfidy. In this ſituation of things the great maſs of the people, who are naturally honeſt and good, ſet themſelves ſeriouſly to work in the buſineſs of the revolution, which might have been carried on with the greateſt harmony, as it had nothing in view but the welfare of the whole. But theſe deceitful men, being enemies of the revolution, and finding that they could not oppoſe it by open force, aſſumed the maſk of patriotiſm, and brought themſelves into places of truſt in every department of the legiſlative and executive power. The effect of this was, that theſe good people found themſelves deceived and betrayed in every ſtage of their affairs, from the beginning of the revolution in 1789, till the 10th of Auguſt 1792. Being ſurrounded by traitors, and not knowing whom to truſt even with the execution of their own vengeance, it was natural, and ſometimes neceſſary, that they ſhould aſſume this terrible taſk upon themſelves. In ſome inſtances indeed the popular vengeance has been ill directed, and has

fallen on innocent heads. But theſe inſtances are rare. *

The limits I preſcribe to my letter will not allow of my entering into details on a ſubject ſo intricate and extenſive. This, however, may be relied on as an undeniable truth, that nothing is more humane, generous, and juſt, than the general ſpirit of the revolution; and whatever particular acts may ſeem to contravene theſe principles, thoſe acts are chargeable upon its enemies, and not upon its friends.

But to arrive at the ſubject the moſt intereſting for your immediate conſideration, let us follow the courſe of the revolution in a geographical ſenſe, and paſs with it from France to Piedmont. The revolution in this journey has ſtopped to winter in Savoy, from whence I write this letter; and before we mount the Alps, it is natural to make a pauſe, to contemplate the country where we are.—Here

* This was written previous to the eſtabliſhment of the *Revolutionary Tribunal.* It is indeed to be regretted that that inſtitution was deferred to ſo late a period; as it was calculated to prevent a more tumultuous mode of exerciſing popular vengeance. But it is more to be regretted that ſuch a tribunal became neceſſary at all, and eſpecially that it has been ſometimes uſed by the leaders as an inſtrument of party rage, without an honeſt regard to the good of the cauſe.

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is a people who lately made part of yourſelves, and who are now ſeparated from you, rather on account of their vicinity to France, than for any particular intereſt different from your own. For, in the great cauſe of liberty, the intereſts of all people are the ſame. It is the cauſe of tyranny that has made them enemies; it is the impoſition and falſehood of thoſe who would live on other men's labours, that have occaſioned all the wars of every nation in the world. The people of Savoy were certainly under no obligation to be governed by the King of Jeruſalem, though they had groaned under his yoke for many generations. Their late conduct in declaring their own ſovereignty and independence, aboliſhing hereditary titles, and eſtabliſhing a government of their own on the principles of equal liberty, is a ſubject which muſt ſtrike your minds in a very intereſting point of view. Your tyrants will repreſent it as a crime which ought to excite your indignation; and they will call on you to take arms and ruſh headlong into a deſtructive war, to aſſiſt them in reducing this country again to their obedience. They are now preparing their forces, augmenting their armies, borrowing money abroad, and extorting it from the hand of induſtry at home, for this deteſtable purpoſe. You are to be taken from your farms and your ſhops, and enrolled in the regiments of death.

death. If you are unwilling to engage in this new kind of ſlavery, you are to be ſeized upon like ſo many felons, dragged from your wives and children, and tortured into diſcipline under the laſh of a military officer. Your familes are to be left to periſh in poverty, while you perhaps are ſlaughtered in the field.

But before you ſuffer yourſelves to be driven to this deſperate buſineſs, I intreat you to reſort to your own reaſon, and exerciſe the right of judging for yourſelves. Conſider the nature of the enterpriſe, and the object you have in view. Who are the people on whom you are going to let fall this terrible ſtroke of vengeance? What is their crime? Are they not your brothers and friends? Have they not acted as you would have done in their ſituation? And ought you not rather at this moment to follow their example, than to be the inſtruments of their deſtruction and your own? Let us attend to this enquiry before it be too late.

The people of Savoy, as to their local poſition, ſtand in the ſame relation to France as you ſtand in to Italy. They and you are poſted in the marches of theſe two great fractions of the Continent. As long as this part of Europe is governed by tyrants, perpetually contending for dominion

on

on each ſide of the Alps, theſe poſitions expoſe you both to the inroads of all parties. You cannot avoid being inſulted by foreign armies in their paſſage through your country, although you have no intereſt in their quarrels. Your hiſtory is full of examples of this kind, from the days of Hannibal, down to that infamous war of the Spaniſh ſucceſſion, which involved your country in blood, and held half Europe in arms for many years together; a war in which you had no other concern than that of being the victims of foreign diſputes. The face of your country bears the inſulting marks of this unfortunate poſition in which you are placed. It is covered with fortifications. As if nature had not thrown rocks and mountains enough in your way, you have been forced to create them by the hand of art, to encompaſs your towns with walls, and disfigure your fields with towers and caſtles. Your agriculture has been ill conducted, your manufactures neglected; all the uſeful arts have been forced to yield to a general ſyſtem of defence againſt the enemies of your neighbours, when you had no enemies of your own.

In this ſituation, what is to be done? You cannot change the poſition which nature has given to your country. Your only reſource is to change the policy of Europe from war to peace. You are more

more peculiarly intereſted in the perpetual peace of Europe than any other people on earth. This is a weighty conſideration, a truth which your tyrants cannot deny. It is the knowledge of this truth which has influenced the people of Savoy in their late change of government. It is in this point of view that they have contemplated the French revolution; with this view they have adopted it themſelves, and wiſh to extend it to you, whoſe ſituation ſo nearly reſembles their own. With this view you ought to wiſh to extend it to all the States of Italy, to Spain, and to the circles of the empire, from whence it would travel through Europe, and through the world.

The principles of this revolution are thoſe of univerſal peace; and it is impoſſible that it ſhould fail to produce the effect, becauſe it takes away every motive for national hoſtility, and teaches the people of all countries to regard each other as friends and fellow-citizens of the world. Eſtabliſh equal liberty among the people, and inſtruct them in the duties that ariſe from that ſituation, as the French are about to do; you will then find that the buſineſs of tyrants has ceaſed, and the race is forever extinct. Purge the earth of its tyrants, and it will no more be tormented with war.

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The conduct of the people of Savoy in uniting themselves to the French republic, deserves a farther consideration. This was a measure incidental to their geographical position on the French side of the Alps; and the arguments which induced them to it, do not apply to you. It is probable that for the purposes of civil government you will henceforward be two distinct people. But this step of their's cannot be considered by you as an act of hostility, or a breach of friendship. They are certainly not less your friends since they have ceased to be your fellow-subjects. It is an essential quality of a French citizen to be the friend of all people, especially of those in his neighbourhood, whose peace and happiness will always be necessary to his own.

The essence of tyranny is to counteract the œconomy of nature, the essence of liberty is to promote it. Nature has said that the French and the Savoyards should be one people; but tyranny has said that the Savoyards and the Piedmontese should be one people. Consult your history, and see what torrents of blood have been shed to cement this unnatural union. Come and view the condition of this unfortunate people; possessing one of the finest countries in the world, and deprived of the means of improving it; subjected for ages to a

race

race of weak and impolitic princes, who, fixing their reſidence on the other ſide of the Alps, have paid no other attention to this part of their dominions, than to keep the people in poverty and ignorance, in order to ſecure their obedience. A military force, ſent from your country, has been maintained here to inſult the peaceable inhabitants, by exerciſing the police in every town and village. The Senate of Savoy, which was formerly a legiſlative body, has been long ſince reduced to the ſimple functions of a judiciary tribunal, and its members appointed by the king. He has prevented the working of the mines of iron, lead and coals, with which the country abounds; he has prevented the eſtabliſhment of any one of the different manufactures to which the inhabitants are peculiarly invited by the abundance of raw materials, by their numerous currents of water, by their vicinity to France, and the convenient navigation of the Iſere and the Rhone; he has diſcouraged their agriculture by the ſhackles he has laid upon their commerce, even in the interior of his own dominions; for the trade between Piedmont and Savoy has been ſubjected to the ſame pernicious regulations and impoſitions which exiſt between rival nations among the moſt jealous deſpots of Europe; he has interpoſed his authority between parents and the duties they owe their children, by diſcouraging the

education

education of youth, ſo far as to oblige thoſe who are deſigned for the learned profeſſions to perform their ſtudies at Turin.*

It would be tedious to recount to you all the inſtances of folly and cruelty exerciſed by your government againſt the people of this country. One general complaint, which appears to be well founded, is, that all your kings, eſpecially the one from whom they have now revolted, have ſhown an humiliating diſtinction in their treatment of you and them. The Savoyards have been treated as your ſlaves, as well as the ſlaves of your common maſter. Their hard earnings have been drained from them, to increaſe the wealth and

* There are in Savoy ſix different colleges of education, which have exiſted for ſeveral centuries, and have been excluſively appropriated to thoſe ſtudies which have been known in Catholic Europe by the name of Theology. This was a neceſſary precaution of the government; as, without diſtributing theſe inſtitutions in all the principal towns, and rendering this ſort of inſtruction eaſy and cheap, it would have been impoſſible to have initiated a ſufficient number of men to keep the people in that ſtate of ignorance which was neceſſary for their continuance in ſlavery.

Within a few years there has been eſtabliſhed in the college of Chambery a profeſſorſhip in law, and another in medicine, but under this reſtriction, that two years reſidence here ſhould be reckoned for one year at the univerſity of Turin. And no man could practiſe law or medicine within the king's dominions, untill he had taken his degrees at Turin.

popula-

population of Piedmont. You muſt obſerve, however, that this was not deſigned as an advantage to you, neither has it been ſo in fact. It was done to facilitate the collection of the king's revenue. You have been made the inſtruments of drawing money from theſe people, for no other reaſon than that it was more eaſy to draw it immediately from you, than from them, by the tyrants of Turin.

The condition of theſe people was perhaps no worſe than yours. You have in your country more wealth than they, but you have infinitely more of real indigence. You were both taxed as high as you could bear*; and your taxes were impoſed

* The population of the principality of Piedmont is reckoned at four millions. The amount of the public revenue ariſing from that principality is only 22 million livres of Piedmont, equal to £1,100,000 ſterling, forming an average of 5s. 6d. a head. This is excluſive of *dimes* and other eccleſiaſtical taxes, which anſwer to the tythes and poor rates in England. The public taxes in England, excluſive of theſe, form an average of about 55s. a head. Yet the people of Piedmont are, if poſſible, more diſtreſſed with taxes than the people of England; although their ſoil is naturally more fertile, and their country more abundant in materials for manufactures. Their ſituation indeed is not ſo favourable for commerce, but it is not unfavourable. By this compariſon we may judge of the cruel, uncreating influence of a government which can ſo completely deſtroy the native energy of man.

The

impoſed in the moſt arbitrary manner. The King could augment or vary them any day at his pleaſure. The Savoyard was poor, but he was not miſerable; he was not inſulted by the diſplay of luxury paſſing before his eyes, though he was ſenſible that he ſupported a ſet of infamous courtiers beyond the mountains, who riot on the labours of mankind.

The effect of tyranny has uſually been to vitiate the morals of ſociety, and deſtroy that energy of mind which is natural to man in a ſtate of freedom. The people of Savoy exhibit a remarkable exception to this rule. They retain a ſingular purity of morals, and a firmneſs of character, which the weight of a long and complicated tyranny has not been able to debaſe. They have long witneſſed the vices and endured the injuſtice of their maſters, without learning to be vicious or unjuſt. They have felt the inconvenience of that unnatural combination of things which cut them off from the country to which they really belonged, and bound

The Duchy of Savoy, whoſe population is 424,000, uſed to pay annually into the treaſury at Turin about three million livres of Piedmont, equal to £ 150,000 ſterling. This was the utmoſt that the hand of deſpotiſm could collect from a people whom it deprived of the means of improving the advantages which nature had given them.

them to a diſtant lord. But almighty liberty has at laſt diſſolved the chain, and reſtored them to nature and to France.

The moral character of this people, which renders them ſo worthy of our eſteem, has likewiſe fitted them for the enjoyment of the liberty to which they have been ſo ſuddenly born. No people, riſing at once from ſlavery to a ſtate of equality and independence, ever conducted themſelves with ſo much dignity and moderation. They roſe, like the infant Hercules, to the vigour of manhood in a ſingle day. They ſhowed themſelves maſters of the whole ſyſtem of goverment, the moment they became maſters of themſelves. They have committed no blunders; they have taken no retrograde ſteps; they have loſt no time in idle diſputes, and uſeleſs etiquette. Their National Aſſembly, which was the firſt repreſentative body that ever was heard of in the country, and conſiſted of ſix hundred and fifty members, organiſed itſelf and finiſhed its ſeſſions in nine days; during which time it did more buſineſs than any body of men under like circumſtances could be expected to perform in ſo many months. But there is one fact more remarkable than all the reſt, a fact which hiſtory will announce to the admiration of the lateſt ages: the revolution in Savoy has not yet coſt a ſingle drop of blood.

blood. It has been attended with no acts of violence, no tumultuous meetings, no neceſſity for the intervention of military force. The force of reaſon has conducted the whole operation; and the ſacred energy of liberty has proved itſelf to be the ſource and guarantee of the moral attributes of man.

Such is the condition of this reſpectable people; and ſuch is the point of view in which you are to conſider the late meaſures they have taken to reclaim and ſecure their rights. From this conſideration you will naturally turn your attention to yourſelves, and contemplate the duties you are called upon to perform. For the time is faſt approaching when you can no longer be the idle ſpectators of the triumphs of liberty. Although the revolution in Savoy is hitherto free from the violence of war, it depends on you to ſay whether it ſhall continue ſo to the end of another year. It is in your power at this moment to declare that the Alps ſhall never more re-echo the ſound of a cannon, nor their majeſtic ſtreams be ſtained with human blood. Your deſtiny calls you either to pronounce the ſentence of miſery and ſlaughter upon thouſands of yourſelves and of your neighbours who will follow your example, or to declare

the immediate emancipation, peace and happineſs of all the States of Italy.

This is doubtleſs a ſerious commiſſion, as it renders you reſponſible for the fate of ſo conſiderable a portion of your fellow-creatures. But obſerve the limits as well as the extent of your power. Though you hold the balance of great benefits and of great diſaſters, which the preſent ſtate of affairs is ready to offer to your country; though you are able, by the aſſiſtance of France, to riſe as one man, and reclaim your own ſovereignty, eſtabliſh your own liberty, and provide for the future tranquility of this part of Europe; though by a contrary conduct you may fight the battles of your tyrant againſt the friends of your peace; yet remember, you cannot long impede the progreſs of liberty. Her cauſe is that of reaſon and of God; ſhe will not liſten to any capitulation with deſpotiſm; the monſter muſt be driven beyond the Adriatic, and baniſhed from the face of the earth. Italy muſt be free; ſhe cannot wear her chains much longer; it would be glorious for you to be the firſt in this regeneration of ſociety in that ancient garden of the world. Such a meaſure would be an example of virtue to your children, a conſolation to the ſhades of your anceſtors, who for a long ſucceſſion of ages have paſſed away in the clouds of prejudice, without

without knowing the means of happineſs, or perceiving the dignity of man.

Your king has joined the coalition of deſpots againſt the people of all nations. Their arms are directed againſt France; but their hoſtility is really againſt their own ſubjects. What cauſe of quarrel had the king of Hungary, or the Elector of Brandenburg with the people of France? None. Their jealouſy was againſt the people of Hungary, of Auſtria, of Brabant, and of Brandenburg. They ſaw that theſe nations were about to reclaim the rights of man, and to caſt off the yoke of oppreſſion, as the French had done. They, therefore, to retain their unjuſt power at home, concluded that it was beſt to ſtrike the revolution at its root, and conquer Germany in France. They knew, if they could ſubdue the French, and completely vanquiſh the ſpirit of liberty in that country, that all the people of Europe would ſhrink beneath their chains, and their maſters might probably ſleep upon their thrones for another half century.

Such was the policy of your maſter. You cannot ſuppoſe that, as King of Jeruſalem, or Prince of Peidmont, he had any ground or colour of diſpute with the French nation. That nation had no concern with him, nor with any part of his do-

minions. They were occupied in their own affairs, at peace with all the world, and declared that they meant to remain ſo. He entered into the war with them for no other purpoſe but to keep you in ſubjection. The war was againſt you, and is ſtill to be carried on againſt you the next campaign. He intends to make you his ſoldiers to fight his own battles againſt yourſelves, although he orders you to point your cannon againſt the French.

This is the true ſtate of the caſe. The whole of this war on the part of your monarch is maintained by deceiving you. Indeed the whole buſineſs of monarchy is deception; kings muſt govern by deception, as long as they govern at all; for it is impoſſible for one man to tyranniſe over a whole people, but by deceiving them. I have no particular diſlike to your king, any more than to all others; he is probably no worſe than kings in general. They hold an office that is perfectly uſeleſs in ſociety, and exceedingly deſtructive to the peace and happineſs of mankind. In this view they ought to be deteſted by every man, and rejected by every nation.

France has been forced into the field, to encounter this infamous combination of robbers, this war of all crimes againſt the principles of all virtue.

tue. She has undertaken the defence of human nature. She has aſſumed a new kind of tactique unknown to the art of war, and irreſiſtible to the armies of kings. She has armed herſelf in the panoply of reaſon; her manifeſto is the rights of man, her ſword the pledge of peace. In this ſpecies of warfare we need not be aſtoniſhed at her ſucceſs. What people can reſiſt the hand that comes to break their chains? The armies of liberty are every where triumphant, while their ſtandards are ſcarcely ſtained with blood. Victory compleats her work, before they arrive to celebrate the conqueſt; and the entrance of the French troops into the conquered country is regarded by the people rather as the proceſſion of a civic feaſt, than as the dreaded violence of war. Their general, inſtead of puniſhing the new recovered citizens with confiſcation, impriſonment, and death, meets them in their Jabobine ſocieties, and invites them to form their primary aſſemblies. The forts and garriſons which he erects to ſecure his conqueſts, are printing preſſes and reading clubs.

Such is the war in which the illuſtrious monarch of Turin is engaged. Theſe are the armies he expects you to encounter in the field. If you wiſh to know in what manner the combat ought to be conducted, you may learn it from the people of

Savoy, whoſe example in this reſpect, as in many others, is worthy to be followed by every nation. You may learn it likewiſe from the people of Nice, from thoſe of Hainault, Flanders, Brabant, Malines, Antwerp, Guelderland, Namur, Liege, Spires, and Mayence; all provinces, principalities, or independent ſtates, conquered to liberty within the laſt three months. As I have kept no complete regiſter of theſe conqueſts, perhaps the above liſt may be incomplete. But it matters not; if it were complete for to day, perhaps it would not be ſo for to-morrow. This advice is intended for the inſtruction of the people; if your king ſhould deem it inconſiſtent with his warlike character to follow the ſame advice, he can take a leſſon from the battle of Gemmappe.

The French army deſtined for your deliverance will probably not paſs the Alps till the ſpring. You have the remainder of the winter to deliberate on the part you have to act. You can by that time decide whether you will receive them as enemies or as friends.—In the latter caſe, you have only to ſtudy the principles of republican government, ſend away your tyrants, and prepare yourſelves to give leſſons of liberty to all the Italian States. The troops of Auſtria, which are now about to enter your territories from Milan and Tuſcany, under

pretence

pretence of aiding you againſt the French, will flee before them, as they have done in the Low Countries, the moment you manifeſt your intention of doing your own buſineſs in a peaceable way.

But, after a due conſideration of the circumſtances which I have endeavoured to detail, ſhould you conclude to regard the French people as your enemies, and to meet their armies in the field, I ſhall tremble for the conſequences of your unfortunate deciſion. Thouſands among you muſt fall the victims of the infamous cauſe of your tyrant, which cannot be ſupported. On that day, I beg you would call to mind the honeſt advice of a ſtranger, who now ſpeaks to you the words of truth; who has been a ſteady obſerver of the riſe and progreſs of liberty in America and in France; and, who, from theſe advantages is able to eſtimate the force of its principles, and predict the triumph of its arms.

I adviſe you above all things to be cautious of the troops in the pay of Auſtria, who are marching to join your army. You cannot be ſo blinded by your leaders as to ſuppoſe that this band of ruffians is brought into your country to render ſervice to you. They are deſigned to keep you in ſubjection, and to take from you the freedom of your choice

choice in the great queſtion, Whether you will adopt the principles of the French revolution? They will be poſted in your rear, to act againſt you if you ſhould refuſe to act againſt the French. Your poſition may ſeem a critical one, placed in the interval between two contending powers; but, remember that one is an army of freemen, the other a horde of ſlaves; on one ſide is the permanent force of a nation, whoſe means are inexhauſtible, on the other the accidental hirelings of a deſpot whoſe ſcepter is falling from his hands; from one you have the offer of equal liberty and perpetual peace, from the other a continuance of your ſlavery, an augmentation of your burthens, and a certainty of future wars.

Italy is deſtined to form one great republic. The boundaries which nature has given it are peculiarly ſuited to this purpoſe; and as long as we follow nature, in politics as well as morals, we are ſure to be in the right. Politicians, who have not well conſidered the effects of liberty, are alarmed at the extention of the French republic, fearing it will become too powerful for its neighbours. For this reaſon the union of Savoy is mentioned as a ſubject of jealouſy to other nations. The enemies of your liberty will not fail to make uſe of this circumſtance to excite your fears and provoke your reſentment.

reſentment. Men who reaſon in this manner have formed their maxims on thoſe deſpotic ſyſtems of government to which they have been accuſtomed. They are maxims which can no longer apply to nations, when maſters of their own actions, and at liberty to govern themſelves by the collected wiſdom of the great body of the people. A nation in this condition will never diſturb the peace of its neighbours in any manner whatever. Its intereſt, on the contrary, will be to promote the peace and proſperity of every country in the world.

When a nation is governed by one man, like Piedmont, or by a few families, like the ancient ariſtocracy of Rome, and ſeveral modern ones in Italy, the intereſt of thoſe who govern, is to extend their dominions; becauſe it augments their perſonal revenue, and adds to the weight of their influence over the people, whom they conſider as their property.—For this reaſon they make war; for this reaſon they form treaties of alliance to guarantee each other in their conqueſts, and in the property which they have in the people.—In purſuance of this policy, the Prince of Piedmont, in the courſe of that long Spaniſh war which I have mentioned, purchaſed with the blood and treaſure of your nation, the title of King of Sardinia; and at the cloſe of the war, he obtained from the Houſes

of

of Auſtria and Bourbon, and from the King of England, a guarantee of the poſſeſſion.

It is eaſy to conceive that a ſyſtem of robbery and murder of this kind, carried on thro' all Europe for centuries together, muſt be reduced to ſome certain rules. Theſe rules, by a miſapplication of terms, are called the *law of nations.** It is rather the law of deſpots, who know no law but their own fears. It has likewiſe been neceſſary to eſtabliſh ſome general ideas of what is called the *balance of power* among the ſtates of Europe, requiring that each ſtate ſhould be reſtrained to certain fixed limits. On this principle, when any particular power endeavours to extend its limits, it is natural to tax that power with ambitious views, and to regard it as an object of jealouſy. This reaſoning is perfectly juſt when applied to regal and ariſtocratical dominions; but under the reign of liberty the argument has loſt its ground; dominion itſelf is at an end; all the technical terms in the ſcience of politics have changed their meaning; and as we muſt begin the ſcience anew, it is to be regretted that we are not furniſhed with new words, to ex-

* We may hope ſoon to ſee the *Law of Nations* eſtabliſhed on different principles; that is, on principles as different from what it has been, as the intereſt of nations is different from that of thoſe perſons who have uſually governed them.

preſs

preſs our ideas with more preciſion than we can with the old.

If all the nations of Europe were as free as the French, and every individual member of ſociety were equally independent of every other individual, the queſtion reſpecting the boundaries of any particular government would become in a great meaſure indifferent, both to the people of that government and to all their neighbours. No perſon would have any intereſt in extending or contracting the territorial limits of a ſtate. They would be eſtabliſhed purely on the principle of convenience for the adminiſtration of the interior concerns of the people, and by the free conſent of all parties. And whenever it ſhould be found more convenient to change them, they might be extended or contracted on the ſame principle, without injury to any perſon, and without exciting the jealouſy of any nation.

I could cite you many inſtances from the United States of America, in which this theory has been carried into practice; which would prove to you that the doctrine I here advance, as one of the effects of liberty, is not chimerical. But an inſtance more ſtriking to you, and which will form an epoch in the hiſtory of Europe, is the conduct of the

National

National Convention of France on the propoſition of Savoy to be united to that republic. Here we ſee a ſovereign people, uninfluenced by any fears, hopes, or connections from abroad, deliberating in the moſt ſolemn manner, whether they will extend their territorial boundaries, by the admiſſion of ſeven new provinces, inhabited by four hundred thouſand freemen, who had ſent their deputies to ſolicit an union.* To raiſe a queſtion on a propoſition of this kind is certainly a new thing in politics. Louis XIV. would have carried on a war for half a century, and ſacrificed twice that number of his own ſubjects, to have made ſuch an acquiſition to his dominions. But the members of the Convention who deliberated on this queſtion had no perſonal intereſt to ſerve, no ambition to gratify. It was merely a queſtion of national convenience, whether the frontiers of the republic ſhould remain fixed on the limits of Dauphiny and Lyonnois, or be extended to the Alps which appear to be the natural boundary of France.

The latter opinion prevailed; but it was rather on account of the preſent circumſtances of Italy

* The ſeven provinces which formed the Duchy of Savoy, now united to France, under the name of the department of *Mont Blanc*, were Savoy proper, Genevois, Carouge, Chablois, Fauchigny, Tarentaiſe, and Mautienne.

than

than of France. Italy is ſtill governed by deſpots; and it is to be expected, that as long as they remain in power, they will continue the war they have undertaken againſt the French. To prevent their incurſions, it was neceſſary to oppoſe them the barrier of the Alps. But if Italy were as free as France, all cauſes of hoſtility between them would be for ever removed. It would be ſcarcely poſſible in the courſe of human events, that they would ever more have any ground of contention. In that caſe it would be perfectly indifferent, as to perſonal intereſt, both to the French and the Savoyards, whether they ſhould form one people, or two, or ten.—And whatever reſolution they ſhould take, as moſt convenient to themſelves, would never excite your jealouſy or reſentment.

No people has more to gain by this pacific ſyſtem than thoſe of Piedmont. You inhabit a fertile country, productive of all the moſt neceſſary articles of life; ſeveral of which are in great demand among your neighbours. All that is wanting to render you happy is to be maſters of the fruits of your own labours at home, to be ſecured againſt war, and to have a free circulation of the objects of commerce.

Theſe three things are now within your reach; they

they would follow as a neceſſary conſequence of adopting the principles of the French revolution, and eſtabliſhing the liberties of Italy.

With the moſt ardent wiſhes to render you ſervice, in the preſent ſolemn criſis of your affairs, I have written you this letter. If it ſhould anſwer no other purpoſe, it will at leaſt ſerve as a teſtimony to my conſcience, that I have endeavoured to do my duty, and to merit the title which I claim, that of your ſincere and diſintereſted friend,

Joel Barlow.